Securing release of Indian PoWs

324. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of army personnel taken Prisoners of War and lodged in Pakistani jails following the Kargil war, were declared deserters;

(b) if so, the details of such cases which have come to light, and what steps have since been taken to secure their custody from Pak authorities and to compensate and rehabilitate them and their families; and

(c) whether in so me cases irreparable damage culminating in death of mother and desertion and remarriage by wife was caused to the PoWs?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Two individuals (No. 1582754A Lance Naik Jagsir Singh and No. 1588445L Sapper Mohammed Arif) both of 108 Engineer Regiment (Sub-Unit 23 Field Company), deployed in Mushkoh Sector since September 1999, went missing on 17th September, 1999 and were declared 'Absent Without Leave' from the same date. On completion of 30 days of absence, the above individuals were declared deserters, as per existing Army Rules.

Consequent to the receipt of confirmation of the presence of the individuals in the custody of Pakistan Law Enforcement Agency, their names have been taken off the deserters list. The monetary benefits that have accrued and paid to them are as under:

(a) Lance Naik Jagsir Singh:

(i) Engineer-in-Chief s Branch—Rs. 50,000/- (Rs. 25,000/- each to mother and wife as a grant)—paid on 10th May, 2004.

(ii) Pay and Accounts Office—Rs. 77,340/- (Rs. 38,670/- as family allotment each to mother and wife from September, 1999 to 31 st May, 2004)—paid on 13th June, 2004.

(iii) Total amount disbursed —Rs. 1,27,340/-.

(b) Sapper Monammed Arif: Nil (Due to the demise of his parents and remarriage of his wife). However, Rs. 2,28,000/- and Rs. 2,55,000/- have since been credited to the accounts of Lance Naik Jagsir Singh and Sapper Mohammed Arif respectively as pay and allowances.

Shri Gurdev Singh, father of Lance Naik Jagsir Singh died and Smt. Hazra Begam, mother of Sapper Mohammad Arif expired during 2002. Further, on investigation it was also learnt that Mrs. Noorchasmi Khatun *alias* Gudia wife of Sapper Mohammad Arif got remarried to Shri Toufique in April, 2003. The information regarding these personnel being in the custody of Law Enforcement Agency in Pakistan was received in December, 2003. Consequently, the families were informed regarding their whereabouts and well being.

Compassionate appointment

†325. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications for appointment on compassionate ground in various departments of Ministry of Defence received by Government during last three years till date;

(b) the number of persons who have been given appointments each year out of the applications so received and the number of persons whose applications have been rejected alongwith the number of pending cases; and

(c) the reasons for rejected and pending cases?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) As per extant policy on compassionate appointment, only 5% of the Group 'C & 'D' vacancies to be filled up through direct recruitment are available for making appointment on compassionate grounds. Large number of cases are pending or have to be rejected due to non-availability of adequate vacancies for the purpose.

Fabrication of Aluminium Caskets by DRDO

326. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) had expressed its ability to indigenously design and fabricate Aluminium caskets which were imported from USA at a very high cost as reported by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG);

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.